

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

OUR PUBLIC DEPOTS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE DEFENSE OF AMERICA

The SPEAKER. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a very important issue. Driving back to DC., from North Carolina on Tuesday, I was listening to the radio. Paul Harvey made a statement, "Blackhawk down in Alabama." Certainly that got my attention, as it would anyone.

What he was talking about is the fact that the workers down at Sikorsky had gone on strike. These are the people that are responsible for preparing and keeping our 105 helicopters, Blackhawks, up in the air and ready to carry our troops to defend our Nation.

This got my attention because I have a depot in my district. It is down at Cherry Point. I want my colleagues in the House to know that these public depots are extremely important to the national security of this Nation. A public depot provides maintenance, engineering, logistics, and support to the United States military. Public depots are staffed by Federal employees and provide a strike-free workforce to repair and maintain the equipment that our men and women need to defend this Nation.

For an example, in my district, we have a naval aviation depot at Cherry Point. It employs over 3,500 people in the upkeep and maintenance of numerous aviation platforms, most of which are used by the Navy and Marine Corps. However, they also perform work on other platforms for the Special Operations Command, the Army, and the Air Force.

We actually have in this Congress a Depot Caucus. It is made up of Democrats and Republicans who truly understand the importance of having these public depots. The men and women that work at these depots, they are so important to the national security of this Nation that a few years ago when the commandant of the Marine Corps at the time, General Krulak, appeared before the Committee on Armed Services and the question was asked, How important are the public depots to the Marine Corps, his statement, Mr. Speaker, was this: he said that the public depot is absolutely critical to the 911 force of this country.

The reason I come to the floor today is because those of us, again, on both sides of the political aisle who are part of the Depot Caucus, we had the same situation with the Clinton administration that we had with the Bush admin-

istration. Many of the people in these administrations do not appreciate the fine work that the public employees are doing at these depots, and we continually battle to make sure that there is a partnership so that the public depots can remain strong, not only for the present, but also for the future.

Let me read just a couple of sentences from this article about Sikorsky Workers Strike, Call Contract Proposal Unfair. It says: "Unionized workers at an Alabama plant that builds and repairs Blackhawk helicopters for the military went on strike on Monday, calling the company's contract offer unacceptable.

"About 105 helicopter mechanics represented by the Teamsters union chanted and picketed outside Sikorsky Support Services, Inc., after contract negotiations broke down after a month."

The reason I wanted to come to the floor again, Mr. Speaker, today is because our Nation is at war. It has not been declared as a war, but we have men and women in Afghanistan and other parts of the world, and they are fighting each and every day. Many are being killed.

Those at the public depots are the kind of employees that, by Federal law, cannot strike; so what they do whenever they are called upon, they go overseas, like during Desert Storm. Many from my district of North Carolina, the Third District, where Cherry Point is located, these people went over to make sure that the equipment that our fighting forces needed was in top-notch shape. So we must as a Congress remember that the public depots are absolutely critical to the national security of this Nation.

Just a couple of other points and then I will close, Mr. Speaker. I think that too many times everybody says, we want to privatize this, we want to privatize that. But when we come to the national security of this Nation, again, the commandant of the Marine Corps at that time, General Krulak, made the statement that if we did not have the public depots, we would jeopardize the 911 force of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I hope in this next Congress we will continue to work together to ensure that our public depots remain strong and are given what they need to be certain that they can maintain the equipment that our men and women in uniform need so desperately to defend the national security of this country.

I will close by reading the last paragraph, and then I will include this article for the RECORD.

"The company recently announced it had landed a \$1.5 billion contract to build 80 H-60 Blackhawk helicopters for the Army and 82 H-60 utility helicopters for the Navy."

Again, as I close, I just want to say that our public workers at the public depots, they do not strike under any circumstances. They are always there to maintain what our military needs so

they can continue to defend the national security of this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that we must remember our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform, and I ask God to please bless America.

The article referred to is as follows:

[From the Salt Lake Tribune, Oct. 15, 2002]
SIKORSKY WORKERS STRIKE, CALL CONTRACT PROPOSAL UNFAIR

TROY, AL.—Unionized workers at an Alabama plant that builds and repairs Blackhawk helicopters for the military went on strike on Monday, calling the company's contract offer unacceptable.

About 105 helicopter mechanics represented by the Teamsters union chanted and picketed outside Sikorsky Support Services Inc. after contract negotiations broke down after a month.

Union negotiators said the company's contract offer weakened workers' health benefits. But Ed Steadham, a spokesman at the company's headquarters in Stratford, Conn., said he was disappointed the contract was rejected.

Sikorsky has offered a 10 percent pay raise over three years and improved pension benefits, Steadham said.

"The company believes it offered a competitive package of pay and benefits," he said in a statement.

Union spokesman Rocco Calo said the company wants to triple inpatient hospitalization co-payments for workers and increase annual deductible fees.

Sikorsky Support Services is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sikorsky Aircraft Corp.

The company recently announced it had landed a \$1.5 billion contract to build 80 H-60 Blackhawk helicopters for the Army and 82 H-60 utility helicopters for the Navy.

THE STATUS OF AMERICA AND RANCOROUS CAMPAIGNING

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning with great concern. As my colleague from North Carolina has just referred to, we are a Nation at war. We are faced with acts of terrorism around the world at home and abroad. We have unprecedented random acts of violence, and we have the worst economy that this country has seen in 50 years.

We have got political campaigns going on all over this Nation. When I have had the opportunity to see some of these campaigns in action, and we see the political advertisements that are on television and the various and sundry activities that are taking place, mostly it is negative. Mostly, it is attacking each other, the Republicans and the Democrats going after each other and declaring in some way or other what a horrible person the other one might be.

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I have to say today, Mr. Speaker, that the issues that face us today are not partisan. We should be focused and concentrating on some very serious issues, but they are not partisan issues.